

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kristin Gelder
Mac Joseph
(212) 606-7176

SOTHEBY'S TO OFFER THE JEFFERY B. ELLIS ANTIQUE GOLF CLUB COLLECTION ON SEPTEMBER 27-28, 2007



THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTION OF ITS TYPE IN EXISTENCE

New York, New York – On September 27 - 28, 2007, Sotheby's is proud to offer for sale The Jeffery B. Ellis Antique Golf Club Collection, the most wide-ranging and historically important collection of golf clubs in the world. Mr. Ellis has devoted the past 30 years to traveling the world in search of the most creative, historical and innovative golf clubs ever made. Assembled one club at a time, the Jeffery B. Ellis Antique Club Collection includes approximately 800 golf clubs that span the history of clubmaking from its earliest days to the beginning of the steel shaft era. The collection, comprised of more than 600 lots with estimates ranging from \$200 to \$300,000, is expected to bring in excess of \$4 million. The exhibition will be free and open to the public at Sotheby's New York from September 20th through the 26th.

Jeffery B. Ellis

Mr. Ellis purchased his first lot of antique golf clubs at a Goodwill store in 1974 and has been fascinated by the evolution of their design ever since. Mr. Ellis says of the golf club, “In the world of sport, there is really no more creative implement.” By 1979, his passion for collecting historic golf clubs grew to be a full-time business and Mr. Ellis soon became a leading authority on the subject. Over the years, he has handled literally thousands of clubs of various materials, from various dates since the game’s inception. Today, the Ellis Collection documents every aspect of the golf club in all its variety at every point in history between 1600 and the early 1930s. No other collection presents the amazing evolutionary odyssey of the golf club in such fascinating and exacting detail.

The history of these clubs is detailed in three books that Mr. Ellis spent twelve years researching. His first book, *The Clubmaker’s art: Antique Golf Clubs and Their History*, is the industry’s bible for antique golf clubs. Featuring more than 600 clubs and their individual histories, this tome was selected by *Golf World* magazine as one of the top 10 golf books of the 20th century. *Travel & Leisure Golf* magazine included it in their list of the top 25 golf books ever written. In 2003, Mr. Ellis released its sequel: *The Golf Club: 400 Years of The Good, The Beautiful & The Creative*. In January 2007, Mr. Ellis released his most comprehensive work to date, a two-volume set, *The Clubmaker’s Art: Second Edition Revised and Expanded*. This book, detailing every club in his 800-club collection, is now the industry standard.

Mr. Ellis said, “The experience of assembling this collection was completely absorbing. I did not want one of everything, just one of everything that was truly creative, unique, or historical. Consequently, I enjoyed the clubs I collected, but I lived to acquire the next great piece.”

Lee Dunbar, Director of Sotheby’s Collectibles Department, said “This collection not only holds some of the greatest golf clubs ever made but provides an unequaled width, breadth and depth to the history of the golf club. Amazingly, the collection also provides an opportunity for both beginning and advanced collectors to acquire clubs they can enjoy for a lifetime.”

According to Graham Budd, founder of Graham Budd Auctions Ltd and Sotheby's consultant for the sale, "The Ellis Collection, in its entirety, stands as an unmatched monument to the history of golf and the passion of its players."

Club-Making

From its 15th century roots in Scotland to the end of the 19th century, golf was the province of royalty, played by wealthy enthusiasts who could afford expensive hand-crafted clubs. Clubmaking was an art practiced by a select group of skilled craftsmen who were often champion golfers themselves, and also frequently tended to the courses on which the game was played. Unencumbered by modern conventions and restrictive golf regulations, these early club makers contributed to the game's evolution by creating an ingenious array of diverse equipment, which boasted colorful and legendary names such as cleeks, spoons, mashies, and niblicks. Few of these early clubs remain to tell the story of how the game was once played.

The Golf Clubs

The Earliest Clubs

The Ellis Collection begins with what many consider to be two of the oldest surviving irons in existence. **A Very Early and Important Square Toe Light Iron**, *circa* 1600, is a first generation club that was designed primarily for use when the ball lay on sandy ground or among small stones (pictured right, est. \$150/250,000). An example of a second generation club is the **Square Toe Heavy Iron**, *circa* 1700 (est. \$125/200,000). Only a few such examples dating to 1600-1800 remain and are in Scottish club or private collections.



Long Nose Clubs

Prior to 1890, golfers used clubs that had long, wooden heads, naturally called "long nose" clubs. In the late 1700's, clubmakers began to mark their work. The Ellis Collection offers more than sixty clubs by both famous and elusive clubmakers. Highlights include **a circa 18th century Long Nose Putter stamped "A.D." attributed to Andrew Dickson**, the oldest known clubmaker to mark his clubs (est. \$200/300,000). It has been written that when Dickson was a young boy he served as a



caddy to the Duke of York. This club was once owned by James McCaul, whose name is also stamped below the “A.D.” initials, and was exhibited at the renowned Glasgow International Exhibition of 1901.

The clubmakers of this era were also often its golfing superstars, the Joneses, Nicklauses and Woodses of their time. The collection includes a **Long Nose Putter** (est. \$6/10,000) and a **Long Nose Brassie Spoon** (pictured left, est. \$8/15,000) made by Willie Park, Sr., a professional who won four British Open tournaments including the first ever held in 1860 at Prestwick Golf Club.

“Old” Tom Morris was one of the most revered and beloved clubmakers and players of his era. Morris lost the first British Open to Willie Park by two strokes (in a one day, three round tourney) but won an astonishing four championships in the next six years (1861, 1862, 1864, 1867). The collection includes seven clubs made by “The Grand Old Man” of golf, featuring a **Rare Left-Handed Long Nosed Spoon** (est. \$7,500/\$15,000), a **Long Nosed Play Club** (est. \$10/15,000) and a **Long Nosed Long Spoon** (est. \$7/12,000).

As the official club maker at the prestigious Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews from 1817 until his death in 1856, Hugh Philp was recognized as the Stradivarius of clubmakers for his meticulous craftsmanship. Even a hundred years ago golfers advertised to collect his clubs and *Golf Illustrated* reported that a Philp club was worth untold gold. The Ellis Collection unearths four such treasures: a



Block-Letter-Stamped and a **Script-Stamped Spoon** (est. \$15/25,000 and \$20/35,000, respectively), an unused **Long Nose Putter** once part of the famous Laidley clubs (est. \$18/25,000) and a **Presentation Putter with a Carved Celtic Cross** (pictured right, est. \$35/45,000).

Making clubs at Edinburgh and Musselburgh from 1770 to 1800, five generations of the McEwan family were recognized as extraordinary artisans. Their clubs are sought after for their long, slender heads and necks and shallow faces, attributes similar to Philp’s clubs. Various generations of the McEwan family are represented in five clubs: a *circa* 1800 **Long Spoon** (est. \$30/50,000), a carved



circa 1825 **Presentation Putter** pictured and described in the March 1916 issue of *The American Golfer* (pictured left, est. \$25/44,000), a *circa* 1840 **Long Nosed Putter** (est. \$7/10,000), a *circa* 1860 **Long Nosed Baffing Spoon** (est. \$6/9,000), and lastly, the only one of its type, a *circa* 1865 **Long Nose Play Club** with a 45 inch fishing rod shaft (est. \$17,500/25,000)

Among the other long nose club makers and golf bon vivants are Willie Dunn Sr., keeper of the green at Blackheath and high stakes money match player who once played a match of 20 rounds over 10 days (a **Long Nosed Short Spoon**, est. \$7/10,000 and a **Long Nosed Putter**, est. \$5/8,000); David Strath, who tied for the 1876 British Open Championship but refused to play off in order to preserve his honor (a **Long Nosed Putter**, est. \$7,500/\$12,500); Robert Ferguson, who won three British Opens in a row and then worked for the last 20 years of his life as a caddy (a **Long Nosed Short Spoon**, est. \$10/15,000).

Metalwoods

The Ellis Collection holds more than twenty-seven of the most distinctive and unusual examples made by nearly every maker prior to 1930. It holds the first metalwood produced in the entire history of the game. Devised and patented in 1891 by William Currie Jr., an India Rubber Manufacturer in Edinburgh, the **Currie Metalwood** was nearly a century ahead of its time and is the only one known to exist today (est. \$25/40,000). The collection also contains the very first metalwood to be produced in the United States: Edward Slade's 1896 **Metal Head Driver with a Spring-Loaded Face**. By turning a screw in the back of the clubhead, the golfer could adjust the tension of the spring behind the wood face placed in the aluminum head (est. \$5/8,000). Other highlights include the **Thompson and Mitchell Metalwood**, an aluminum head with 28 holes filled with black gutta percha (pictured right, est. \$10/15,000) and a one-of-a-kind 1913 **Kelly Driver** designed to be as a universal club with various inserts that could change the loft (est. \$15/25,000). Although none of these clubs caught on for any length of time, they established the framework for metal designs to come.



Steel Shaft Clubs

At the turn of the century, clubmakers found that steel offered the golf shaft greater durability and consistency and a solution to the dwindling supply of good hickory. Although the United States Golf Association (USGA) and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews (the ruling authority outside of the United States and Mexico) did not legalize steel shafts for play in the 1920's, a few clubmakers began to experiment but most of their creations were produced in small numbers and therefore are quite difficult to find today. The present collection features the oldest known golf club



to use steel in its shaft, a *circa* 1881 **Tom Morris Play Club** (est. \$20/30,000), as well as thirteen other different designs made prior to legalization. The **Whistler Iron**, made by Robert Cowdery in the 1920's, is the only known club made entirely from a single piece of steel and the first steel shaft produced by what is now the True Temper Corporation (pictured left, est. \$15/25,000). One of the more creative and intricate steel

shafted clubs in The Ellis Collection is the **Gatke Springy Shaft Swing Trainer**, circa 1925. Devised to improve a golfer's tempo, this club features a patented coiled spring low on the patented wood shaft intended to guide ones backswing and forward drive with a more consistent rhythm (est. \$6/9,000).

As the game of golf evolved, clubmakers were forced to creatively tackle each new predicament the existing golf clubs could not address. This inventive force produced clubs with appearances and functions unlike most modern golfers have ever seen. The Jeffery B. Ellis Collection contains the greatest selection of these rare, and often one-of-a-kind, innovative wonders in the world.

Mechanical Clubs

One trend in 19th century clubmaking was designing a single club that could be adjusted to fit the unique needs of a variety of golfers and a variety of situations. The first "mechanical" golf club ever made, a **Putter with a Pivoting Shaft devised and produced in 1891 by George Twist** (est. \$10/15,000), is only one of the sixty different hickory shafted mechanical/adjustable golf clubs acquired by the Ellis Collection. A second intriguing example is the **George**



Rees “Wizard Putter”, patented in 1916, that features a telescoping alignment rod to most accurately line up putts (pictured on page 6, est. \$9/12,000).



Multi-purpose Clubs

Among the more fascinating club designs is the multi-purpose club, usually two or more faces used to strike the ball. Clubs that have two opposing faces are referred to as “duplex clubs” and were designed for both ambidextrous golfers and for those who might want to play an opposite-handed shot away from a tree or rock. Made in the early 1800’s, the **Duplex Wood** originally resided in the acclaimed Harry Wood Collection and is the oldest known specialty club of its kind (est. \$30/40,000). A second example of the duplex club is the **John Radel Duplex Iron**, patented in 1928, with two head blades connecting at the top line leaving the entire underside open (pictured left, est. \$2,000/\$3,000).

Rake/Water Irons

Rake irons, the solution to the ever so frustrating puddled ball, are among the rarest and most attention-getting clubs. In addition to the first rake/water iron ever made, devised in 1879 by W.R. Roy, the Ellis Collection offers twenty-three other models of rake irons and perforated face clubs. **The Roy Water Iron** was nicknamed the “President Iron” because it has a hole in the clubs head, making it “clear headed” (pictured right, est. \$15/\$25,000). Further examples of the rake iron are the **Ben Knight Rake Iron**, designed in the 1920’s and one of only two known, and the **Atlas Company “The Rake” Iron**, circa 1910’s (est. \$5/7,000 and \$6/9,000, respectively).



Center-Shafted Clubs and Neck Joints



The present collection contains more than forty different center-shafted woods, irons and putters initially designed with the belief that positioning the shaft or axis in line with the ball would deliver greater power and accuracy. The **Grant Mashie**, patented in 1892 by George Grant of Sunningdale, England, was intended to exploit this newfound power and, according to the patent, “more

easily strike the ball out of difficult places” (pictured on page 7, est. \$10/15,000). The **Auchertlonie Brassey**, one of two examples known, is a center-shafted wood named for its designer Willie Auchertlonie (est. \$5/7,000). In addition to striving for durability and ease of assembly, a few clubmakers created neck joints to produce (they hoped) longer and straighter shots. The Ellis Collection contains twenty-five different neck joints that were tried in woods, irons and putters. W. Claude Johnson produced the **Johnson Driver** with a single screw in the base of the brass ferrule that holds the shaft in place (est. \$6/9,000). One of the more elegant examples is the *circa* 1890’s **Swan Neck putter** that features an elongated, curved hosel that forks over the shaft and then rivets in place (pictured right, est. \$3/\$5,000).



Additional Elements

The Ellis Collection contains more clubs that bear the names of famous golf personalities and clubmakers prior to 1930 than any other golf club collection. These clubs are the most innovative examples bearing the names of such golf legends as Tom Morris, Willie Park Jr., Harry Vardon, Chick Evans, Walter Travis, Walter Hagen, Bobby Jones and others. The **Vardon Putter**, endorsed by the six time British Open champion Harry Vardon, was patented in 1904 by John Carruthers, a London stockbroker’s clerk and golf aficionado. This unique club features a dramatically curved face designed to correct an errant shot struck on the toe or heel (est. \$3/5,000). The **Trophy Club**, with sterling a silver clubhead and two dozen sterling silver golf balls fastened to 24 sterling shaft bands, was presented in 1903 to the Bromley and Bickley Golf Club of London, one of only two presentation clubs that served as perpetual trophies. These two clubs are the only two trophy clubs with sterling silver golf balls in private hands (pictured left, est. \$12/18,000).



#

For More Information, Please Contact the Press Office, 212 606 7176

Registering to Bid

Registration is required to bid in Sotheby's auctions. You can register easily in person at our New York headquarters any time before the sale or via fax when you submit an absentee bid form. Please call the Bids Department to ask about registering.

Placing Bids

There are three ways to bid at Sotheby's:

- **Place bids in the room** by attending the auction and raising your paddle (issued with registration) or otherwise signaling the auctioneer.
- **Bid over the telephone** through a Sotheby's representative, who sits in the room and conveys your bid to the auctioneer. Phone bidding is best when you have not set an upper limit for an item, and want to pursue it until it's yours.
- **Enter Absentee bids.** An Absentee (or Order) bid is a form you fill out and return to Sotheby's bid department via fax or mail. The form indicates the highest amount you would like to bid for an item or items. (The auctioneer will submit bids on your behalf as necessary, up to -- but never above -- the amount you specify.) Absentee bid forms are printed in the back of each catalogue, and are available at Sotheby's offices and on our website at www.sothebys.com.

Important Note

Please be advised Sotheby's charges winning bidders a fee known as the Buyer's Premium, which is added to the successful bid amount. Bidders are advised to read the Conditions of Sale (published in the catalogue and online) prior to bidding and are encouraged to ask Sotheby's staff if you have any questions.

Auction in New York
September 27-28, 2007

Exhibition in New York
September 20-26, 2007

Catalogue
August 2007

Questions:

General Inquiries:

- Collectibles Department: 212 606 7910

To Place a Bid:

- Bids Department: 212 606 7414